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WASHINGTON TALK

A Complaint on Leaks

In the continuing war in Government over leaks of classified information, it is usually the White House that accuses Congress of spilling national security secrets. Now, the tables have been turned.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York Democrat who is vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has accused White House and senior Administration officials of engaging in "serious leaks of national security information" to the press.

In a May 5 letter to President Reagan, the Senator noted that two recent articles in The New York Times cited Administration officials as the sources of information on charges of covert action in Afghanistan and Central America.

Specifically, the Senator wrote, an article May 4 outlined efforts by the Central Intelligence Agency to supply Afghan rebels and "alleged" roles played by Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This article, Mr. Moynihan complained, cited as its sources, "Administration officials, Administration intelligence analysts and experts, a senior Administration official, Administration experts and a political appointee in the Administration."

An article April 7 describing a "highly classified" National Security Council document about "alleged" covert action in Central America was also attributed to Administration officials, the Senator said.

"It is particularly disturbing to read these articles within weeks of your March 11 directive on safeguarding national security information," Senator Moynihan wrote, referring to Mr. Reagan's recent order that authorizes greater use of polygraphs, secrecy agreements and prepublication reviews.

"Indeed," Mr. Moynihan added, the articles "give an appearance of disdain within your Administration for the very principles set forth in the directive."

Senator Moynihan requested that the President order a "thorough internal executive branch investigation into these matters."

James F. Clarity
Judith Miller